



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 104th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 142

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 1996

No. 39

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m., and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Abraham Lincoln expressed his dependence on prayer to sustain and strengthen him in difficult and challenging times. He said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere to go but to prayer. My own wisdom and that of those all about me seemed insufficient for the day."

Gracious Father, thank You for the gift of prayer. When problems pile up and pressures mount, we are so grateful that we, too, have a place to turn. And You are there waiting for us, offering Your grace for grim days and Your strength for our struggles. How good it is to know that we are not alone. We can be honest with You about our insufficiencies and discover the sufficiency of Your wisdom given in very specific and practical answers to our deepest needs. Lord, help us to spend more time listening to Your answers than we do in our lengthy explanations to You of our problems. We dedicate this day to seek Your guidance, to follow Your direction, and to do our best to lead this Nation according to Your will. We humbly confess our profound need for You and praise You for Your faithfulness to give us exactly what we need for all the challenges of the day ahead. Lead on Lord. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able acting majority leader is recognized, the Senator from Washington State.

SCHEDULE

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, this morning the Senate will immediately begin consideration of the conference report accompanying H.R. 956, the product liability bill.

Under the consent agreement reached last night, there will be 5 hours of debate, equally divided, which will end just after 3 p.m. today. At that time, the Senate will begin a vote on invoking cloture on the conference report, to be immediately followed by a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to the Whitewater legislation.

As a reminder, under a previous order, if cloture is invoked today on the product liability conference report, there will be an additional 3 hours of debate tomorrow morning at 9 a.m., with a vote on the adoption of the conference report at 12 noon on Thursday. Following the cloture votes scheduled at 3 o'clock today, the Senate will begin consideration of S. 1459, the grazing fees legislation. Additional votes are, therefore, to be expected today in regard to the grazing fees bill.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CAMPBELL). Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

COMMON SENSE PRODUCT LIABILITY LEGAL REFORM ACT OF 1996—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to the conference report to accompany H.R. 956.

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 956), a bill to establish legal standards and procedures for product liability litigation,

and for other purposes, having met, after full and fair conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses this report, signed by a majority of the conferees.

The Senate resumed consideration of the conference report.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I am pleased, after a lapse of almost 1 year, to present to the Senate and to support the conference report on H.R. 956, the Common Sense Product Liability Legal Reform Act of 1996. This is a bipartisan proposal reflecting, essentially, the decisions made here in the U.S. Senate last year, without the broader additions that were passed by the House of Representatives.

Mr. President, during the course of this 5 hours today, there will be many statements—passionately held—about what the future holds with respect to both our legal system and our economic system, and whether this bill should pass. As a consequence, Mr. President, I want to start my remarks with a statement about what has already happened as a result of a very modest product liability reform that was passed by the Congress of the United States, and signed by the President, just 2 or 3 years ago. I am going to do that because that action speaks louder than any words we can say about the desirability of this broader legislation.

On August 17, 1994, President Clinton signed the General Aviation Revitalization Act of 1994. That act created an 18-year statute of repose on general aviation, piston-driven aircraft. That single provision, in less than 2 years, has already had a magnificently positive impact on the general aviation industry.

Since the enactment of the bill, the general aviation industry has recorded its best year in more than a decade. In 1986, as a result largely of product liability litigation, Cessna, a famous name in aviation, stopped producing piston-driven aircraft. It has now reentered that field. In July, Cessna will

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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